



Local Government Coordinator Forum Summary September 26, 2008

The following information summarizes the questions submitted by meeting participants along with the responses given during the afternoon portion of the meeting.

Question

In terms of the IndianaMap, what is being done for rural/small counties that do not have a GIS?

Who has a concern for rural county data?

Response

The importance of including rural/small counties in the process of developing the IndianaMap is widely acknowledged since there are many benefits in doing so both for those counties and for the rest of the state. For example, economic development and homeland security interests both demand an understanding of infrastructure, population demographics, and other important geographic information about rural/small counties.

Small and/or rural counties were encouraged to contact Jim Sparks, the Indiana Geographic Information Officer at jsparks@iot.in.gov or (317) 234-5889 for suggestions on how to utilize grants to address this need.

It was also recognized that there is a variety of free software available to small and rural counties. Examples include AccuGlobe, GeoServer (OGC), etc.

Question

Who works with 911 call centers? What kind of data do they have?

Response

911 call centers can be important data providers for GIS purposes since they have address point data.

Question

Can [IGIC] host a seminar for free software/data?

Response

Absolutely! The IGIC Education Committee will add that topic to our next series of seminars. Please send additional ideas for seminars to any member of the Education Committee.

Question

Despite how GIS Coordinators feel or are depicted, elected officials are the data stewards of their local government. In the future, do you see this changing and if so how do we maintain democratic accountability? This is “public” information after all. How do we ensure the public maintains control over how it is utilized?

Response

- Producing tangible results is vital
- Developing personal relationships between local GIS and elected officials is vital. Local elected officials are generally more likely to listen to the advice of those working within a community than they are to listen to the recommendations of an advocacy body such as IGIC or a State agency such as the GIO's office.
- The Kernan-Shepard report recommends significant changes in the number of elected officials in local government. Drastic changes in the organization of local government could have an adverse impact on GIS within local government. IGIC is reforming its Legislative Committee, and this will be one of the areas watched closely.

Question

Convince me that county government jobs will not be threatened by a completed and operational IndianaMap.

If I give my data, why do you need me?

Response

- The IndianaMap creates more drive for the data.
- Knowledge is power
- We need local data stewards to continue developing and maintaining local data because no one else has sufficient knowledge to do this – not the state, not Google, not the feds, and not the private sector.
- When the copy of the data contained in the IndianaMap gets stale, we will need to refresh it with up-to-date local data. This needs to be a continuous process.
- Also, a statewide data layer that is made of “stitched” together local data will find an audience that will be hungry for this data and will want to continue to consume it, thereby adding new reasons to keep the local data stewards in place.

Question

Can we get an assurance of regularity and accuracy of statewide flyovers? For example, 6” pixels, every four years, 2’contours, etc?

Response

To do this it will be necessary for a source of sustainable funding for collection of imagery to be secured

Federal support for collection of orthophotography imagery for the nation is growing. We need to look at these opportunities and when the monies will be available.

Question

Can we get any State review of our interagency data sharing agreement to see if it jibes with state law and/or court rulings?

Response

It was recommended that individuals and organizations with this need should contact the Indiana Public Access Counselor. But first let your managers know you in case you get an answer from the PAC that may not be popular. Information about the responsibilities of that individual as well as information about how to contact them is available at www.in.gov/pac.

Note: IGIC is working to post samples of current data sharing agreements. If you have one you would be willing to share, please email it to jdubeansky@igic.org.

Question

IGIC works often through the counties - which makes sense - but, cities, towns, and regional commissioners also have good data and could use funding as well. Do you have any strategies for that?

Response

- It was recognized that the State has historically focused on engaging counties rather than cities or towns in the development of the IndianaMap. As GIO, I will look for opportunities to work with (and help fund) GIS in cities and towns as well as counties.
- Roger Koelpin discussed the availability of IDHS Grant dollars. GIS managers were advised to talk to the county EMA about these dollars.
- Funding opportunities can be facilitated by effective communication. IGIC can help with this.

Question/Comment

I need help to be more effective with my work – i.e. job functions and not vendor driven.

Response

- IGIC can help support these issues.
- There are user groups that exist in the Northeast and Northwest areas of the state. These groups meet every two to three months and provide opportunities to learn from other GIS users. Hopefully regional user groups will form in other areas of the state. Contact IGIC if you want information about current user groups or if you have interest in forming a new regional user group.
- Instate support is needed for Charter development.

Question

Some agencies charge for data and view the State's data sharing and distribution plans as a competitor. What are your thoughts?

Response

It was stated that neither IGIC nor the State is making money for data made available through the IndianaMap. The GIS literature is pretty convincing that most government agencies do not make any significant revenue from charging for data, and many actually lose money when all resource costs are considered, and that does not include the lost opportunity cost of having a wider audience of your local data. But that aside, we are really talking about two different products –

one is statewide with minimal attribution and the other is countywide with rich attribution. Will you be selling both of these?

Question

There are concerns that the data sharing plan may require us to violate confidentiality agreements like those done under our recent LUCA project or w/E911 Telco providers?

Response

In these agreements counties cannot use Census data to improve their own local data set. Assuming that the agreement was not violated, then there is no problem sharing the data with the state. If that agreement was violated then that is a different problem than data sharing.

Question

There is some concern that without minimum data standards, which must come from the local level, the data sharing plan will be more difficult and less successful. The State's data sharing project must indemnify local jurisdictions from lawsuits arising from use of their data (i.e. not just indemnify the State as is expected).

Response

It was suggested that metadata should reflect the conditions under which data should be used to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. Jim Sparks also carefully reviewed the content of the data request letter sent to local officials that specifically stated that local jurisdictions were not to be held liable for data published on the IndianaMap.

Question

Long term maintenance of local data sent to the State is a concern. Local GIS departments are the best resource to do this, but they are often over worked and do not need another large burden/task. What is the solution?

Response

We are not asking for any more update effort than is currently being provided. Metadata will inform the user of the data's currency.

Question

What type of cost savings are there in using a server web-based GIS [versus] using desktop GIS? [For example, what about the differences between] ArcServer vs. ArcGIS Editor, [Arc]Info, [and Arc]View?

Response

No one at the meeting was aware of a study of this type having been done.

Question

A concern was expressed that everybody is using related GIS software.

Response

It is true that much of Indiana GIS is dominated by a limited number of GIS solutions. However, IGIC and the GIO's office do not advocate any one GIS solution over another.

Question

A concern was expressed that not everyone has a voice in state [GIS data] standards. [However, it was also pointed out that] this is what is good about workgroups.

Response

Absolutely true! IGIC encourages anyone that wants to join one or more of the workgroups to do so. Information about workgroups is available at www.igic.org.

Question

IndianaMap data should be available as both a downloadable file and as a service. [This should preferably be a] Web streaming data service that can be incorporated directly into an ArcMap session.

Response

These services already exists. Instructions for connecting to the web service can be found at www.indianamap.org.

Question

How can staff, hardware, and software be funded? How can political support [for funding these needs] be developed?

Property taxes as a funding source for GIS is not an option.

Response

One option to consider is the Indiana Department of Homeland Security grant discussed by Roger Koelpin during the morning session. His presentation will be made available to meeting participants.

Question

What role will GIS play in the 2010 census?

Response

The Census Bureau has been actively working with local government agencies to obtain local GIS and address data for their internal use. LUCA is one example.

THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS WERE SUBMITTED BY PARTICIPANTS BUT NOT DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING DUE TO TIME LIMITATIONS. ANSWERS WERE ADDED OUTSIDE OF THE FORUM.

Question

Specifically, how does the IndianaMap handle requests for public records?

Response

There really are no requests for public records to the IndianaMap. Instead there is a download function that is provided so that a user can download most data sets that can also be viewed.

Question

How can we [utilities] participate in the IndianaMap...contribute our data?

Response

Utility data would clearly add to the richness of the IndianaMap and therefore provide additional value to users of the IndianaMap. So, the big picture is a resounding YES. The micro view is that we need to work out some responsibilities first, such as who will prepare the metadata, how will the data be transferred, how often will it be updated, etc.

Question

What committees do not meet in Indy? What committees meet only by phone?

Response

Some committees, such as the Education Committee and the Data Sharing Committee meet almost entirely by phone. Others may meet in person at times and by phone at other times. This typically varies by the objectives that a committee is pursuing which change from time to time. The best way to discover the answer to this question is to contact the chair of the committee that you are interested in joining.

Question

How would the State's data sharing initiative be resolved in terms of conflicts with existing data sharing agreements?

Response

Without benefit of a specific example, adherence to the Access To Public Records Act should resolve most conflicts.

Question

Can we talk about some of the ways that correct address data has been compiled for your GIS? What sources have you used?

Response

This question is best directed to other counties that have done an addressing project.

Kosciusko County Example: Our point addressing file is completely home grown. We started the creation of our address point file by pulling the addresses from our Assessor's CAMA (ProVal) system and linking those addresses to the GIS parcel file (by a parcel identification number maintained in CAMA and GIS) . At that point we had the Assessor's addresses in the parcel polygon file. We then created a parcel centroid point file from the parcel polygon file that now had an address attribute. We knew these addresses weren't perfect but they were a start. Next, we compared the assessor addresses to the addresses maintained by the Area Plan Commission in their (old) plat books. This was a manual process that took months/years of work. During the same process the Area Plan Commission GIS Technician was moving the address point from the parcel center to the exact location of the address (house, business etc). In Kosciusko County, the Cities and Towns all assign their own addresses. We created a map for each City and Town and asked them to check our addresses (from the Assessor System) against their addresses in their books and utility billing systems. All but one town was cooperative in this effort. Over the years we have field checked many areas to verify that addresses we have in our system match the addresses on the ground.

Question

How can I receive more accurate GIS data for natural gas lines?

Response

This question is hard to answer without specifics. Recommend you contact the natural gas utility company serving the area of interest.

Question

Why would you not want to share your utility info? If you have any sense, you can see most utilities via manholes, hydrants, drains, etc.

Response

There are many reasons given for sharing or not sharing data. At the end of the day we are all required to adhere to the terms of APRA, so many of the reasons on one side or the other are moot.

Comment

We don't want to change the way we parse out our addresses - Prefix, Street Name, Street Type, Suffix is our way. We also use well defined types – ST, LN, BLVD, etc.

Response

The sub-grant money can be used to develop an automated process to parse the data as requested. If the local government does not have the ability to parse the data as requested it can be provided as is.

Comment

The County is willing to share [their data], however the GIS provider wants to be paid for their time and the County will not or cannot pay for the sharing and transfer of the data.

Response

The IDHS sub-grant is more than enough to cover the cost of a vendor setting up a WFS service. Most all of the costs for WFS are one-time up-front setup costs. If your vendor is asking for all or more money than what is provided under the 2-year grant we recommend you talk to another vendor.

Comment

Data sharing must be a two-way street to gain support from local officials. Ortho photos are key. Local entities need data not dollars for narrowly-defined grants that don't advance the development of local GIS.

Response

The IndianaMap provides over 200 layers of GIS data for local government departments to use. Many of these layers are produced by and paid for by State Agency budgets.

General Comments

A challenge is the cost of data from a county especially to another government entity such as a city, university, or non-profit.

[We] encourage you to send information to newspapers regarding IndianaMap. Road shows [are a good idea] so that folks in counties with the GIS will be encouraged to learn about what is available on IndianaMap.

We talked about how much it costs for a GIS person or persons to reproduce our data and keep track of the fees we charge for it. One way our county has found to help with that is we signed a contract with our vendor to market and resell our data, free of charge to us, and we collect a 10% royalty for it. It frees us up to do our work and brings in some income.

Links

The following links reference resources discussed at the meeting:

Kernan and Shepard report http://indianalocalgovreform.iu.edu/assets/docs/Report_12-10-07.pdf

499 US 340 Feist Publications Inc v. Rural Telephone Service Company Inc
<http://openjurist.org/499/us/340/feist-publications-inc-v-rural-telephone-service-company-inc>